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Infinite Intellectual Leap-Frog: Tracing Three Character Voices Through Four of Tom Stoppard's Works--Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon, Albert's Bridge, Jumpers, and Dirty Linen

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INFINITE INTELLECTUAL LEAP-FROG: TRACING THREE CHARACTER VOICES THROUGH FOUR OF TOM STOPPARD'S WORKS--LORD MALQUIST AND MR. MOON, ALBERT'S BRIDGE, JUMPERS, AND DIRTY LINEN

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ABSTRACT

Tom Stoppard (1937-), British playwright, creates in his Absurd novel Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon (1966) three character voices that begin a debate on man's reason for existence. Instead of resolving the debate at the end of his novel, Stoppard, using the same character voices in various combinations, continues the debate in three of his later works: the plays Albert's Bridge (1968), Jumpers (1972), and Dirty Linen (1976). The three character voices include the realist's, who ties to make some sense out of the disorder of the world and to find his place in it; the manipulator's, who ignores the disorder of the world and creates his own place in his own world; and the sensualist's, who withdraws from the world into sensual pleasures. In Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon, Stoppard creates the characters of Mr. Moon (the realist's voice), Lord Malquist (the manipulator's voice) and Jane Moon and Laura Malquist (the sensualist's voice split between two characters). With these three character voices Tom Stoppard begins and continues his debate on man's reason for existence through the novel and the three plays.

The technique that Stoppard uses to create dialogue for his on-going debate is labelled by the playwright, himself, as an "infinite . . . intellectual leap-frog" in an interview with the editors of Theatre Quarterly (May-June, 1974). This system works well, allowing Stoppard to present an argument, a rebuttal, a counter-argument in one work and then continue it in another by leap-frogging the same character voice from an earlier work to a later one. Sometimes he changes the sex of the character voice, splits one voice between two characters, or combines two voices into one character. In this way he creates a

neverending supply of characters to continue his debate on man's reason for existence and produce a type of comedy that attempts to marry the "play of ideas" with the "work of wit" (Gambit, 10, No. 37, 1982).

One of today's most successful British playwrights Tom Stoppard (1937-) was catapulted into the limelight of the modern British and American stages by his first successful play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, which concerns two themes common to the Theatre of the Absurd: the loss of one's identity, and the loss of control over one's reality. His protagonists, two minor characters from Hamlet, find themselves trapped in the play-world of Shakespeare's masterpiece, having no discoverable identity of their own except when they are "on stage." But what first captures our interest is not so much that they are trapped as that they at some length and with much persistence try with what intellectual resources they can muster to reach some understanding of or accomodation with their incomprehensible situation. For while some Absurdists may be content to merely dramatize such conclusions as God is dead, the universe is amoral, and there is no answer to the why of man's existence, Stoppard seems to prefer to have his characters strive for meaning however hopeless the search seems.

Another aspect of Stoppard's work--one which is undoubtedly responsible for much of his commercial as well as artistic success--is his clever manipulation of words and situations that delights, intrigues, and sometimes baffles us. That this union of wit and intellectual searching is deliberate can be seen from his attempts in two separate interviews to label or explain his type of drama. In the first he states, "I seem to have gotten into a situation in which I am attempting a marriage of a play of ideas with farce or comedy."[1] In the second

he explains that he "began looking for a marriage between the play of ideas and the work of wit."[2] To some extent, this "marriage" can be seen as a blending of the dramatic practices of such Absurdist playwrights as Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco, and Genet with the intellectual concepts of such thinkers as Giraudoux, Anouilh, Salacrou, Sartre, and Camus:

> (These Absurd philosophers) present their sense of the irrationality of the human condition in the form of highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning, while the Theatre of the Absurd strived to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.[3]

Such a union of the logical and the illogical can be seen in Stoppard's novel Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon where the intelligent Mr. Moon very logically concludes that the world is overpopulated but very insanely carries on his person a bomb to resolve the problem. The same farcical union can be seen in his play Jumpers when the perceptive philosopher George Moore, who is ordinarily concerned with the sanctity of life, unintentionally but comically destroys two of his live props by shooting his rabbit with an arrow and stepping down hard on his turtle.[4]

To dramatize his concern with the intellectual search, Stoppard has developed a system which he refers to as an "infinite . . . intellectual leap-frog":

> But I must make clear that, insofar, as it's possible for me to look at my own work objectively at all, the element which I find most valuable is the one that other people are put off by--that is, that there is very often no single, clear statement in my plays. What there is, is a series of conflicting statements made by conflicting characters, and they tend to play a sort of infinite leap-frog. You know, an argument, a refutation, then a rebuttal of the refutation, then a counter-rebuttal, so that there is never

> any point in this intellectual leap-frog at which I feel that is the speech to stop it on, that is the last word.[5]

But what is intriguing enough to form the subject of this paper is that this preoccupation with an unfinished example of "intellectual leap-frog" has resulted in a debate which starts in one work and then is continued on in at least three others. Three character voices, each with its own point of view and each at odds with the others, are introduced in his novel Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon (1966) and then continued in his earlier plays Albert's Bridge (1968), Jumpers (1972), and Dirty Linen (1976). For all four of these works, his central topic of debate is how to cope with the reality of man's existence. For Stoppard, this method for continuing through more than one work an argument which he has been unable to resolve has apparently proved satisfactory: "If it's worth using once," he said, "it's worth using twice."[6]

In Lord Malquist the reader meets the character voices of the three main participants in the "idea"-debate: the realist (Mr. Moon), the manipulator (Lord Malquist), and the sensualist (Jane Moon and Laura Malquist). Mr. Moon is having difficulty coping with reality because of overpopulation; Lord Malquist withdraws from reality into his own world of style; and Jane Moon and Laura Malquist withdraw from reality into a world of fantasy, sex, and liquor. But as we shall see, Stoppard's system of "infinite . . . intellectual leap-frog" allows him not only to start the debate about the reason for man's existence in Lord Malquist but encourages him to continue the flow of his dialogue through other works.

The three character voices are sometimes combined and sometimes separated by Stoppard to provide participants for his debate. He may expand one character to include more than one voice, such as with the sensualist-manipulator Maddie in Dirty Linen, or split one voice so that two characters share it, such as with the sensualist's voice represented by both Jane Moon and Laura Malquist in Lord Malquist and the realist's voice as represented by both Albert and Fraser in Albert's Bridge. Stoppard may also switch the sex of the character in which the voice is contained: the manipulator's voice of Lord Malquist is heard again in Maddie, the heroine of Dirty Linen, and the realist's voice of Mr. Moon is heard again in Dotty of Jumpers. Using this system Stoppard is able to create and recreate similar characters for his "idea" plays.

To create dialogue for just one work, Stoppard uses what he describes as a "Ping Pong game" technique. The dramatic situation can be considered the "table" for the "game," and the characters are the opponents:

> I always write about two people arguing. I play Ping Pong with myself, but there is no killing shot. It is like Ping Pong against a clock; there is a tendency for the argument to be won by the person who finishes speaking when the bell goes, rather than because there is nothing left to say.[7]

In this manner Stoppard dramatizes for us the flow of dialogue within himself. Perhaps being a good debater in grammar school prepared Stoppard for this technique. His characters likewise are governed by his imagination and the depth of his own temperament:

> It's not true that I decide how deep to go . . . The real answer is that the kind of stuff I write is an expression of my temperament.[8]

By delving into the depths of his temperament, Stoppard is able to produce

very believeable characters even though they appear in absurd situations, such as chasing a lion with a flamingo in its mouth down a London street.[9] For the reader becomes so enmeshed in the minds of the characters that he readily accepts the reality of the absurd world Stoppard has created.

The interaction between the character voices can also be said to create a reality that goes beyond any particular work. In this world one character voice may begin and sustain an argument in a debate in Lord Malquist, then be enabled to continue it in a later work. Even if the character's body dies in the earlier work, his "existence" continues, for Stoppard creates a new body to house the voice and continue the debate in the later work. He does not restrict himself to the facts of the real world where the voice dies with the body; instead, he creates a world where the voice lives beyond the body:

> I think in a way I find it restricting to write about a world I know. It is almost as though it is a liability to keep to the facts. I think I am much more comfortable where you can invent to your heart's content.[10]

So the debate continues.

To look now at the four works in some detail, we must start with Stoppard's earliest work in which he introduces the three main character voices: the realist, the manipulator, and the sensualist. Lord Malquist's plot is loosely centered on the death and funeral of a great (and apparently real) British leader. Mr. Moon, the realist, tries to make a living as Boswell, Inc. by following Lord Malquist around in order to copy his every word into a notebook. However, he gets distracted by the debate going on within his mind and the "realities" of the other characters thereby failing miserably as a recorder of history and at controlling his reality.

Lord Malquist, the aristocratic manipulator, attempts to recreate the eighteenth century by tooling about London in a coach-and-pair, wearing morning coats, pantaloons, and kneeboats--succeeding sytlishly in thus manipulating or controlling his reality. And Jane and Laura, the sensualists, employ sensual pleasures to create a world that for the most part disregards true reality: Jane lives in her fantasy world while Laura lives in her boudoir-and-booze world. With these three voices Stoppard is set to begin the debate about the reason for man's existence and explore methods of coming to terms with the possible conclusions.

Through logical reasoning Moon defines his reality (seemingly that of the world as we normally perceive it) and tries to control it. Very important to him in this reality is the issue of overpopulation, which he believes causes most of the problems in the world; his solution is to set off a bomb, forcing the survivors of the explosion to wake up to the fact that there is a problem. The following conversation with himself, in which we meet the italic Moon, illustrates the kind of interior Socratic dialogue he engages in:

> *So you carry this bomb about with you expressly for the purpose of throwing it at someone?*
>
> Well, yes. I suppose there's no getting away from that. Or *leaving* it--I mean it's got this time-fuse. I could leave it, but I don't think I will when it comes to it. I mainly think of throwing it.
>
> *At whom?*
>
> I don't know. I've got a list.
>
> *Now why exactly--*
>
> I don't know. Exactly.
>
> *It's all right, we'll just take it slowly. Would you have a messianic complex about sin, for example?*
>
> No, it's not that, not really, except it is something to do with no one being *good* any more, but that's part of the other thing, of things all getting out of control, too big. I mean I'm not a crank fixated on an individual--it's not vengenance, it's salvation.

From what?

It's all got huge, disproportionate to the human scale, it's all gone rotten because life--I feel it about to burst at the seams because the sheer volume and numbers of the things we're filling it up with, and people, it's all multiplying madly and no one is controlling it because it's all got too big.

But how do you apply--

It's needs an explosion to shock people into calling a halt and catch up, stop and recognise, realise--everyone takes it all for granted. When an oil well catches fire, or a gas well, in the desert, there's this column of fire blasting out of the sand high into the sky, day and night, week in and week out, a fantastic godlike pillar of fire, and the only way you can put it out is to have an explosion, make one, a great big bang that snuffs it out, and then the people can take over again.

Would you describe yourself as a psychotic?

No. I am just wide-open to things, certain things . . .

Some kind of hysteric?

I'm hysterical with secret knowledge. I--

But throwing a bomb--

I want nothing to do with it all--it's self-defense, and if I can't disengage myself by an act of will then perhaps an act of violence--

That's where I got these braces . . .[11]

The last line is the voice of Lord Malquist that brings Moon back into the action of the novel. The character voice of the realist, Mr. Moon, is attempting to cope with his reality by understanding intellectually his purpose for existence. He tries to understand why the world is in such disorder, sees overpopulation as the main cause, and attempts a solution to the problem by destroying the cause; in this way he hopes to justify or make meaningful his existence. By exploding a bomb and suffocating some of the people, he anticipates that the reaction of the remaining people will be to notice that overpopulation is a "fire" out of control around them. But although this seems a logical solution to Mr. Moon, the italic Moon tries to destroy the purposefulness of Moon's actions by intimating that the cause of the trouble is a psychological disfunction in Mr. Moon's mind.

Later in the novel Moon does succeed in exploding his bomb, but it turns out to be a dud that contains nothing more than a large balloon with obscene words written on it. Moreover, his logical reasoning does not prevent him from being destroyed at the end of the novel by a real bomb which is thrown in Lord Malquist's coach, splattering Mr. Moon, the coachman, the horses, and the carriage all over the street. Since the explosion destroys only two men, it has no effect on overpopulation; therefore, the solution of the realist does not resolve the problem of acting meaningfully in his reality and controlling his world.

The character voice of the manipulator, Lord Malquist, on the other hand, by creating his own reality through style, does manage to control his restricted world:

> "Such utter disregard for the common harmonies of life," complained the ninth earl. "I look around me and I recoil from such disorder. We live amidst absurdity, so close to it that it escapes our notice. . . . Since we cannot hope for order let us withdraw with style from the chaos."[12]

Thus the true manipulator is capable of creating his own world, totally ignoring the real world around him by not even attempting a logical solution to the reason for his existence. Instead, he withdraws with style from the problem and creates another existence outside reality.

The third character voice Stoppard presents in his novel is the sensualist's which he splits between two of the women characters, Jane Moon and Laura Malquist. They escape the need for a logical solution to the reason for existence by enveloping themselves in sensual (mainly sexual) experiences. Jane is a strange combination of virgin and vamp who lives for bodily pleasures; yet, she does not allow her husband in her bed and gets her pleasure mostly through make-believe. In fact,

she can chant herself into an orgasm:

> "I know Scotsmen, they don't let themselves be coddled up. They're big. They're big brawny giants with powerful muscles straining taut," . . .--she had her thighs squeezed together, her eyes closed now, head lolling back, a priestess incantating through the fumes of sacrifice--"in their kilts, with their great strong legs rippling hard as knotted cord, burned red-brown by the wind and the sun, hard all the way up, standing astride the hilltop with the wind blowing and their kilts--. . ."[13]

So strong is the sexual excitement that she creates with her chanting that she almost passes out. Creating a fantasy then is one way she has of controlling her reality. Laura, on the other hand, lives in the physical world of sexual intercourse and alcoholic overindulgence that occupies her just as intensely as Jane's fantasy world occupies her. There is also a touch of the manipulator in Laura that is lacking in Jane, for she eventually recruits Moon into her world:

> Moon wished he had not exposed himself to examination. He floundered--"Well, you want to know that there is something going on besides a lot of accidents."
> "But that's all there is going on."
> He almost accepted it but rallied.
> "But if it's all random then what's the point?"
> "What's the point if it's all inevitable?"
> She's got me there.
> "There doesn't have to be a point at all, Bosie." She picked up the bottle and looked into it. "No point at all. You have to provide your own. Enter God. For instance."[14]

And by the end of this scene Mr. Moon has joined Laura in sexual intercourse and afterwards believes that if he can have his daily dose of sex he will be able to cope with reality.

As a master as setting scenes and creating a believable reality out of absurd situations, Stoppard, though he sets his novel in London and uses names of actual places, shapes his reality through the perception of his characters. With only a few intrusions of the real London, the action originates in the minds of Mr. Moon, Lord Malquist, Jane Moon, and Laura Malquist who live in their own realities, touching the outside world only when avoidance cannot be helped. This invented reality of London is the "table" on which Stoppard plays his "Ping Pong game." On the last page of the novel, Mr. Moon takes his final shot and is blown to pieces by a bomb meant for Lord Malquist. As the only character daring to cope with the "impossible" task of comprehending the "real" world, it seems fittingly absurd that he is the only one of the main characters who does not survive. But though his body is scattered into little pieces, his voice continues on in later plays.

With respect to the problem of an overabundance of people in the world, for instance, Moon's voice is heard again as Fraser's in Albert's Bridge. The following is Moon's voice in Lord Malquist:

> It's not that, it's not exactly that--it's all expanding--and I don't know a single person who is completely honest, or even half honest, and they don't know it because honesty is now a matter of degree, and sincerity is something to be marketed and hunger is a statistic and expediency is god and the white rhino is being wiped out for the racket in bogus aphrodisiacs![15]

And we hear it again as it is continued as Fraser's in Albert's Bridge:

> Fraser: Look down there. I came up because up was the only direction left. The rest has been filled up and is still filling. The city is a hold in which blind prisoners are packed wall to wall. . . . There's too much of everything, but the space for it is constant. So

> the shell of human existence is filling out, expanding, and it's going to go bang.
> Albert: You're frightened of traffic?
> Fraser: We are at the mercy of a vast complex of moving parts, any of which might fail. Civilization is in decline, and the white rhino is being wiped out for the racket in bogus aphrodisiacs.[16]

Similar too is the division of the realist's voices into two parts. Throughout Lord Malquist Moon sustains an internal dialogue with himself, that is, with the italic Moon. In Albert's Bridge, to continue the debate about the reason for man's existence, Stoppard divides the realist's voice into two separate characters: Fraser and Albert:

> Albert: I see. A lunatic, in fact.
> Fraser: Not certifiably so. By no means certified. I am simply open, wide open, to certain insights. I do not believe that there is anyone in control. There is the semblance of pattern--supply meeting demand, one-way streets, give and take, the presumption of return tickets, promises to pay the bearer on demand, etcetera--but there's nothing really holding it together. One is forced to recognize the arbitrariness of what we claim to be order. Somewhere there is a lynch pin, which, when removed, will collapse the whole monkey-puzzle. And I'm not staying there till it happens.[17]

However, unlike Moon, who wanted to destroy someone else to solve the problem of the bursting world, Fraser wishes to destroy only himself by jumping out of the world:

> Albert: You came up to go down?
> Fraser: To jump.
> Albert: Jump?
> Fraser: Off.
> Albert: Jump off? You'd kill yourself. Ah.
> Fraser: Yes.[18]

But Fraser, it turns out, does not need to jump after all; for once he is

up high enough on the bridge, he sees the world from a different perspective as Albert did earlier in the play: "I saw the context. It reduced philosophy and everything else. I got a perspective."[19] Fraser's new perspective keeps him from jumping:

> Fraser: I can't belive it. You wouldn't just stand there and watch me kill myself.
> Albert: I thought that's what you wanted.
> Fraser: Well, I did. I couldn't bear the noise, and the chaos. I couldn't get free of it, the enormity of that disorder, so dependent on a chance sequence of action and reaction. So I started to climb, to get some height, you know, enough height to drop from, to be sure, and the higher I climbed, the more I saw and the less I heard. And look now. I've been up here for hours, looking down and all of it is, is dots and bricks, giving out a gentle hum. Quite safe. Quite small after all. Quite ordered, seen from above. Laid out in squares, each square a function, each dot a functionary. I really think it might work. Yes, from a vantage point like this, the idea of society is just about tenable.[20]

For Albert and Fraser, a perspective of the whole is the answer to the question of their existence: to get up high enough to see the edges of their world and, thereby, control their reality.

In Jumpers Stoppard picks up this solution--withdrawal to a distance can set edges to reality and thus allow man to control it and give meaning to his existence--and tests its validity. Dotty, the realist's voice in the play, comes to the conclusion, however, that, from the vantage point of the moon, distance does not show moral order but rather moral disorder, the disorder of murder; tearfully, she realizes that distance reveals not edges but no edges:

> Dotty: (dry, drained): Well, it's all over now. Not only are we no longer the still centre of God's universe, we're not even uniquely graced by his footprint in man's image. . . . Man is on the Moon, his feet on solid ground, and he has seen us whole, all in one go, little--local . . . and all our absolutes, the thou-shalts and the thou-shalt-nots that seemed to be the very condition of our existence, how did they look to two moonmen with a single neck to save between them? Like the local customs of another place. When that thought drips through to the bottom, people won't just carry on. There is going to be such . . . breakage, such gnashing of unclean meats, such covetting of neighbours' oxen and knowing neighbours' wives, such dishonourings of mothers and fathers, and bowing and scrapings to images graven and incarnate, such killing of goldfish and maybe more--(Looks up, tear-stained.) Because the truths that have been taken on trust, they've never had edges before, there was no vantage point to stand on and see where they stopped. (And weeps.)[21]

Dotty's statement then offers a conclusion to the argument that the realist's voice of Mr. Moon starts in Lord Malquist and Albert and Fraser continue in Albert's Bridge: Mr. Moon says, "I like to write about something that has edges where it stops and doesn't go on and become something else."[22] He sets himself an impossible task, for, unknowingly, he struggles and dies in an edgeless world. Fraser and Albert also die, but not before they gain the knowledge, by the flux of 1,800 marching workers' feet, that there are no edges:

> Fraser: That's it, then--they have finally run out of space, the edges have all filled out and now there is only up.
> Albert: Eighteen-hundred men--flung against me by a madman! Was I so important? Here they come.[23]

Dotty remains alive, but she finds herself crippled intellectually when she comes to realize that the world is ultimately chaotic and without order. At this point Stoppard's debate concerning reality and the reason for man's existence, begun in Lord Malquist and continued in Albert's Bridge and

Jumpers, suggests one solution, violent death, and one resolution, a realist cannot cope with the real world.

The rebuttal to the realist's argument is begun in Lord Malquist by the manipulator's voice as heard in Lord Malquist whose solution is to ignore the real world and create his own, one which can be controlled. Thus, he creates his own edges, his own "order".

> "Such utter disregard for the common harmonies of life," complained the ninth earl. "I look around me and I recoil from such disorder. . . . Since we cannot hope for order, let us withdraw with style from the chaos."[24]

Malquist as manipulator, then, sets up edges to his private reality--living as an eighteenth-century gentleman--and ignores what is really happening in the twentieth century. Whereas Moon tries to cope, Malquist merely ignores.

Albert in Albert's Bridge, somewhat like Malquist, resolves the problem of disorder in the real world by creating his own world up on the bridge. However, he recognizes the need for a practical solution to overcrowding while a true manipulator, like Malquist, merely ignores the problem. Albert comes up with a practical solution, at least for him:

> Albert: It was fantastic up there. The scale of it. From the ground it looks like a cat's cradle, from a distance you can take it all in, and then up there in the middle of it the thinnest threads are as thick as your body and you could play tennis on the main girders.
> Mother: Kate will be up in a minute to make the beds.
> Albert: It's absurd, really, being up there, looking down on the university lying under you like a couple of bricks, full of dots studying philosophy--
> Mother: I don't want you getting in Kate's way--she's got to clean.

> Albert: What could they possibly know? I saw more up there in three weeks than those dots did in three years. . . . It's complete, and a man can give his life to its maintenance, a very firm bargain.[25]

Albert completely ignores his mother's telling him to cooperate with the existing world because he is already wrapped up in his own, the bridge. He has discovered a reason for his existence--the maintenance of his ideal, the bridge--just as Lord Malquist lives for the maintenance of his ideal, eighteenth-century style.

In Jumpers, George, somewhat like Malquist and Albert, copes by creating a restriced reality, which in his case is based on a particular religious philosophy. To counter the kind of argument presented by Moon and Fraser that man must cope with his reality through violence because there is no one in control, George preaches that man, instead, must believe in a First Cause, that is, someone in control, who has created order in the world. But this solution proves inadequate when it completely ignores the disorder brought about by the murders of McFee and the astronaut on the moon.

A dramatization of this inadequacy occurs when we find George so wrapped up in his philosophical debate that he cannot help Dotty when she asks him to comfort her:

> George (facing, away, out front, emotionless): Meeting a friend in a corridor, Wittgenstein said: 'Tell me, why do people always say it was natural for men to assume that the sun went round the earth rather than that the earth was rotating?' His friend said, 'Well, obviously, because it just looks as if the sun is going round the earth.' To which the philosopher replied, 'Well, what would it have looked like if it had looked as if the earth was rotating?'[26]

This philosophical tidbit does not comfort Dotty in her breakdown caused by knowledge of disorder through murder. Help of a sort does arrive, however, in the character, Archie Jumper, who turns out to be the true manipulator's voice in this play. George proves to be too much of a realist to be a successful manipulator just as Albert is too much of a realist to survive except on his bridge. A true manipulator, Stoppard seems to suggest, is able to shape his reality in such a way that it is accepted by more people than just himself. And Archie Jumper is just such a manipulator.

Archie, then, continues the voice of the rebuttal begun by Lord Malquist and echoed somewhat by Albert. He has molded his reality to fit his viewpoint, giving it edges by using the god of expediency for his control. His Radical-Liberal party has just come into power, and he has begun the process of molding his world by arresting the dissenters--the realists, the editors of the free press--and shutting down the printing shops. He has appointed an atheist to the highest office in the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, because the man is a member of his party. He seems to convince even Dotty, the Stoppard realist, for we find her echoing Archie's ideas on expediency as the solution to the disorder in the world:

> Dotty: There's no question of things getting better. Things are one way or they are another way; 'better' is how we see them, Archie says, and I don't personally, very much; though sometimes he makes them seem not so bad after all--no, that's wrong, too: he knows not 'seems'. Things do not seem, on the one hand, they are; and on the other hand, bad is not what they can be. They can be green, or square, or Japanese, loud, fatal, waterproof or vanilla-flavoured; and the same

> for actions, which can be disapproved of, or comical, unexpected, saddening or good television, variously, depending on who frowns, laughs, jumps, weeps or wouldn't have missed it for the world. Things and actions, you understand, can have any number of real and verifiable properties. But good and bad, better and worse, these are not real properties of things, they are just expressions of our feelings about them.[27]

The "strength" of Archie's reality is that it contains no moral standards, only expediency. In Dotty's and George's reality, moral standards--good and bad--do exist and so create complications: Dotty finds she cannot cope with the murder on the moon; her intelligence cannot understand the disorder in what is supposed to be an ordered world. And George finds he cannot deal with anything outside his own philosophical reality, so he ignores reality and does not let it interfere with his moral standards. Thus, while Dotty is incapicitated by the murder on the moon, George does not even realize it has happened. Only Archie is able to deal with and accept the murder because he sees it as an expedient--neither good nor bad, but simply something to do to maintain "order."

Resurfacing in Dirty Linen (1976) the manipulator's voice appears as Maddie, the sexy secretary, but combined with the sensualist's voice that first occurred in Lord Malquist in the characters of Jane Moon and Laura Malquist. In fact, Laura seems to be the prototype for Maddie. Stoppard has expanded the touch of the manipulator that he put in Laura in order to create the comic, somewhat farcical, character of Maddie. The power of the manipulator exists in Maddie even while she is bit by bit losing her clothing to grasping hands. She is shown to be in total

control of her world. Her manipulative powers come to light as she gradually begins to control the "Select Committee on Moral Standards in Public Life."[28] In as much as Maddie has been seen in the company of, been dined by, and apparently, slept with every member of this committee, including the female member, she has acquired the manipulative powers a favorite prostitute has over her johns: total control of the situation. The committee has been formed to investigate the newspaper reports of sexual promiscuity by the members of the Parliament. Society, as a kind of moral realist's voice, demands "high" moral standards from its elected officials, but its standards are in conflict with Maddie's which include the advice: "You're just as entitled to enjoy yourself as they are."[29] Seeming at first only to accent the sexual, the newspaper pictures play an important role in the on-going gag of the play: each time a committee member looks at a sexy photograph in a newspaper or magazine, Maddie is seen in stop-action in a similar revealing pose. This gag is more than sexual, however, for it demonstrates that though Maddie appears to be an innocent, naive, young woman who is being taken advantage of by these members of parliament, in actuality, she controls them. Partly, this is demonstrated by the fact that she is the only person in the play who is not adversely affected by the pictures in the papers.

Maddie is a manipulator of the same calibre as Lord Malquist, agreeing with him that it "is necessary to define one's context at all times."[30] She confirms this agreement when she states that each individual has the right to "define his context" and create his own moral standards without outside interference from society:

> Maddie: The press. The more you accuse them of malice and inaccuracy, the more you're admitting that they've got a right to poke their noses into your private life. All this fuss! The whole report can go straight in the waste-paper basket. All you need is one paragraph saying that M.P.s have got just as much right to enjoy themselves in their own way as anyone else, and Fleet Street can take a running jump.[31]

Though early in the play it might appear that she is being manipulated rather than manipulating, such is not the case, as can be seen by a close examination of her restaurant-name-game:

> Maddie: Not with you. Not with Cockie at Claridge's, Coq d'Or, Crockford's. Never at Claridges, Coq d'Or, Crockford's with Cockie. (Her concentration doesn't imply slowness: she is fast, eager, breathless, very good at tongue twisters. Her whole attitude in the play is one of innocent, eager willingness to please. . .)[32]

Her very eagerness for this game suggests her lack of interest in the moral standards that the committee members are debating. She has her own standards in her own world and has the seductive power to draw others into it, a sign of a manipulator. By making her seductive power physical and sexual first and intellectual only second, Stoppard makes it more apparent.

Almost every time a sexy picture is found in newspaper or magazine, Maddie loses another piece of clothing and is caught in a pin-up girl pose. But far from being embarrassed by her gradual striptease, she seems to recognize that her power grows with each loss of a piece of clothing. Thus even at the loss of her skirt, she continues about the business of the committee by passing out the report:

> (He pauses at the sight of MADDIE in her slip. MADDIE has picked up the sets of appendices and come out from behind her desk and taken two steps before remembering her state of undress, she pauses at the same moment, and then decides to continue.)[33]

In fact, the loss of her skirt and slip seem to give her more confidence

in her manipulative powers. She now begins to control the speed at which the committee records the proceedings:

> Maddie: Do I have to write down what you say?
> Withenshaw: I can see you know your way around these committeesMiss Gotobed. You do speed-writing I suppose?
> Maddie: Yes, if I'm given enough time.
> Withenshaw: That's all right. You just tell us if we're going too fast.[34]

In short, by the time the committee is ready to get down to business, the members realize that they will have to go at Maddie's speed or not have the meeting recorded:

> Maddie: ' . . . called to chair.'
> Cocklebury-Smythe: The chair.
> Withenshaw (at Maddie's speed which is about 30 words a minute): 'The chair. The Chair-man's draft report having been read for the first time was further con-sider-ed as fol-lows--'[35]

By the end of the first section of the play, Maddie's control through her striptease is complete: she has lost her blouse to French, the one committee member that she has not met before, and now controls him. During the break in the play she manipulates French into her world of moral standards and thus, in the second part, has control over even his mind. Her words come out of his mouth, much as Archie's words on expediency come out of Dotty's mouth in Jumpers. The result is that the committee's report reflects Maddie's point-of-view on moral standards, not society's:

> French: Thank you. I think I have indeed found a way. I propose we scrap the Chairman's Report as it stands and replace it with a new report of my own drafting. (He holds up a piece of paper. He clears his throat and starts to read.) Paragraph I.

> In performing the duty entrusted to them your Committee took as their guiding principle that it is the just and proper expectation of every Member of Parliament, no less than for every citizen of this country, that what they choose to do in their own time, and with whom, is
> Maddie (prompting): . . . between them and their conscience.
> French (simultaneously with Maddie): conscience, provided they do not transgress the rights of others or the law of the land; and that this principle is not to be sacrificed to that Fleet Street stalking-horse masquerading as a sacred cow labelled 'The People's Right to Know.'
>
> Your Committee found no evidence or even suggestion of laws broken or harm done, and thereby concludes that its business is hereby completed.[36]

Maddie, now in control of the committee, society, and the play, appropriately brings down the closing curtain: "Maddie: Finita La Commedia."[37]

The success of the manipulators raises the question of whether Stoppard has come to the conclusion that the reason for man's existence is to manipulate his reality. However, we need to recognize that all of his true manipulators seem to survive only at the cost of the realists: Lord Malquist survives at the cost of Mr. Moon; Archie survives at the cost of George and Dotty; Maddie survives at the cost of society's moral standards, the realist's voice in Dirty Linen. Moreover, reality is never confronted by the manipulator; he merely ignores it and creates his own. We can, perhaps, conclude, however, that Stoppard's intellectual leap-frogging through his earlier works has given one answer to the debate about the reason for man's existence in Dirty Linen: everyone must develop his or her own moral standards to survive in this Absurd world.

In a way the playwright himself is a manipulator, for he creates his own set of standards in the play and makes his characters react to them. Stoppard introduces the sensualist's voice in Lord Malquist, splitting

it between Jane Moon and Laura Malquist. He employs it as an exploitative tool, a traditional use of the sensual; for example, Laura sucks Moon into her seductive world and demonstrates how sex can blank out reality and make life bearable.[38] Because the sensualist's solution to the debate about coping in this Absurd world is to withdraw into the senses, the manipulator is able to use this tendency in order to control: Archie controls Dotty in Jumpers by comforting her when George has failed to--in a pseudo-sexual, supposedly professional, treatment for her depression after she discovers the murdered McFee--[39] while Maddie controls everyone in Dirty Linen through her striptease. Thus, in the four works discussed Stoppard combines the sensualist's voice with the realist's to represent the controllable characters and with the manipulator's to produce the successful, controlling characters.

In sum, then, we can say that though his characters themselves sometimes embody more than one voice, Stoppard uses three main voices--the realist, the manipulator, and the sensualist--repeatedly throughout the works examined to create dialogue for his debate about the reason for man's existence. And Stoppard's "infinite . . . intellectual leap-frog" appears to be a successful technique for enabling him to produce a neverending flow of dialogue that manipulates the everwilling audience into enjoying his "marriage between the plays of ideas and the work of wit."

NOTES

1 Bruce Cook, "Tom Stoppard: The Man Behind the Plays," Saturday Review, 4 (8 Jan. 1977), 53.

2 David Gollob and David Roper, "Trad Tom Pops In," Gambit: International Theatre Review, 10, No. 37 (1982), 11.

3 Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1962), p. 17.

4 Tom Stoppard, Jumpers (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1972), p. 81.

5 "Ambushes for the Audience: Toward a High Comedy of Ideas," Theatre Quarterly, 4 (May 1974), 6-7.

6 Ronald Hayman, Contemporary Playwrights: Tom Stoppard, 3rd ed. (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1979), p. 2.

7 T. E. Kalem, "Ping Pong Philosophy: Tom Stoppard," Time, 103 (6 May 1974), 85.

8 "Tom Stoppard: The Man Behind the Plays," Saturday Review, 4 (8 Jan. 1977), 53.

9 Tom Stoppard, Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1966), p. 146.

[10] N. S. Hardin, "Interview with Tom Stoppard," Contemporary Literature, 22 (Spring 1981), 163.

[11] Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon, pp. 12-13.

[12] Ibid., p. 16.

[13] Ibid., p. 56.

[14] Ibid., p. 129.

[15] Ibid., p. 18.

[16] Tom Stoppard, Albert's Bridge (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1969), pp. 31-32.

[17] Ibid., p. 32.

[18] Ibid., p. 33.

[19] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[20] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[21] Tom Stoppard, Jumpers (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1972), p. 75.

[22] Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon, p. 64.

[23] Albert's Bridge, p. 40.

[24] Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon, p. 16.

25 *Albert's Bridge*, pp. 17-18.

26 *Jumpers*, p. 75.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

28 Tom Stoppard, *Dirty Linen* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1976), p. 28.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

30 *Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon*, p. 143.

31 *Dirty Linen*, p. 41.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

38 *Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon*, pp. 128-134

39 *Jumpers*, p. 60.

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